Quote - unquote in German:  
Two interactional functions of pivots used as frames for quotation

Abstract

This conversation analytic study investigates syntactic pivot constructions used as frames for quotation in German. Specifically, it describes the use of a right boundary for reported speech (an 'unquote'). German has various resources to mark the boundaries of quotes, but it is said to lack overt grammaticalized ways of 'unquoting' (e.g., enclitics, final particles). The present study documents a lexico-syntactic unquote in German and outlines two interactional functions. It focuses on the use of syntactic pivots in Siebenbürger Sächsisch, a settlement variety of German.

In Siebenbürger Sächsisch, syntactic pivots delimit short, direct self- or other-quotes by using a (past) form of sān ('to say'). Most occur in story-telling sequences. Two functions of the quote-unquote can be identified: (1) Marking or projecting the upcoming story climax by framing the first unit of the climax, (2) dealing with problems in uptake in different action environments by recompleting a turn. These two functions correspond to two distinct structural patterns of the pivot: prosodically embedded (for marking story peaks) vs. prosodically exposed (for response pursuit).

The findings from this study further our understanding of the structuring of story telling, the negotiation of problems in recipiency, and the importance of prosody for action formation.

Keywords:
reported speech; story telling; quotative; response pursuit; prosody; syntax
References


zur Grammatik der gesprochenen Sprache. Niemeyer, Tübingen, pp. 73–98.